

# EWG's Guide to Healthy Childcare

## 1 Create a healthy space

**Seal or remove arsenic-treated wood decks & play structures.** Those built before 2003 likely contain arsenic. Don't allow children to eat at older picnic tables (or cover them with a cloth). Have kids wash hands after playing near these surfaces, or avoid them altogether.

**Watch for lead paint.** Older paint may contain lead. Kids face health risks from loose chips and lead in dust. If your building was built before 1978, use a certified lead-safe contractor for any repairs ([epa.gov/lead](http://epa.gov/lead)).

**Don't use bug spray or weed killer** inside or out.

**Clean greener & disinfect when kids aren't around.** Choose certified green cleaning supplies, dust & vacuum often (with a HEPA filter), use fragrance-free laundry detergent and skip air fresheners & dryer sheets. Disinfectants can be toxic. Where necessary, disinfect with safer peroxide-based products or bleach. Always follow product directions.

**Remove or repair furniture and mattresses with exposed foam.** Before 2005, most foam was treated with toxic fire retardants.

**Take care with compact fluorescent light bulbs.** Don't put them in lamps that can fall, releasing mercury. If a bulb breaks, clear the room, air it out, put on gloves, safety glasses & a dust mask, seal the waste, wash up. Replace mercury thermometers & thermostats with mercury-free options.

### Most important for infants:

- **Mix formula with fluoride-free water**, as the American Dental Association recommends. If your tap water has fluoride, buy non-fluoridated water.
- **Don't serve ready-to-eat formula** - it contains more BPA (from the can lining).
- **Never microwave food or heat milk in plastic.** Use glass or ceramic instead.
- **Use glass or BPA-free baby bottles.** Discard older plastic ones, especially if scratched.
- **Use fragrance-free wipes, diapers & diaper cream.**

**Ensuring a healthy environment for children is important – and not hard! Start with these simple tips.**

## 2 Eating & drinking

**Offer healthy snacks.** Choose fruits & veggies from EWG's Clean 15 list ([FoodNews.org](http://FoodNews.org)) or buy organic – and always wash them. Don't microwave food in plastic. Microwave popcorn bags contain toxic chemicals – try air-popping instead. Choose organic dairy and meat when possible; buy rBGH/hormone-free milk. Use BPA-free dishware.

**Wash little hands before eating - with plain soap & water.** Skip anti-bacterial soaps – they're no better than plain soap and contain toxic triclosan. If you use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, choose fragrance-free.

**Drink safer water.** Filter tap water as needed to remove contaminants. Check EWG's Tap Water Database ([ewg.org/tap-water](http://ewg.org/tap-water)) to find an effective filter. Test water fountains for lead.

## 3 Playtime!

**Avoid soft plastic toys & metal jewelry.** Many plastic softeners are toxic. Choose items labeled PVC- and phthalate-free. Avoid metal trinkets and play jewelry, which can contain heavy metals. Skip face paint unless you know it's free of lead and other contaminants. Natural, unpainted wood toys are a good choice.

**Use safer art supplies.** Don't use rubber cement, permanent or dry-erase markers or materials meant for adults. Stick with paper/cardboard, yarn, wood & homemade play dough. If you don't know what's in something, skip it.

**Apply safer sunscreen.** Use EWG's Sunscreen Guide ([ewg.org/2010sunscreen](http://ewg.org/2010sunscreen)) to find ones with SPF 30+ and zinc or titanium. Skip oxybenzone, retinyl palmitate, sprays, added bug repellent. Wear hats & avoid mid-day sun.

**Adjust outdoor play based on local air quality** using [AIRNow.gov](http://AIRNow.gov). On high pollution days, limit high-energy outdoor play for kids, especially those with asthma.